

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**  
- **FINAL**  
- **May 20, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**  
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Allison, Brusch, Epstein, Heigham, Hofmann, Libensen, Lynch, McLaughlin, Millane, Paolillo, Widmer; BOS Chair Leclerc, SC Chair Rittenburg

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- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg

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- Members Absent: Callanan and Smith

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- The meeting was called to order at 7:34 pm by Chair Curtis.

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- Chair Curtis began by noting that the meeting would focus on the FY10 budget, with the goal of recommending a budget for TM. The school/town split will be addressed first.

- ***Discussion of FY10 Budget: Town/School Split***

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- Chair Curtis: The budget is informed, in part, by best estimates beginning back in September. Non-discretionary expenses are subtracted out and the remaining amount is divided between the schools and the town. We look at the previous year's budget. The split is the starting point, not the end point. The traditional split is 43.8% for the town and 56.2% for the schools. We ask both constituents to draft budgets according to those numbers. Federal stimulus money became known in March. Belmont netted \$1.7M of federal stimulus money. This is one time money. The stimulus money was intended for education and the WC recommended that 100% of it go toward the schools. Both the SC and the BOS opted not to go to the voters for more money e.g. an override. The only way for the schools to get more money now would be to request it from the town. Chair Curtis asked SC Chair Rittenburg to respond.

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- SC Chair Rittenburg: Requesting money from the town is not something the SC is interested in pursuing at all. The town and school really need to be working together. We feel fortunate to have a WC that is not reducing town revenue to the school budget as a result of stimulus money. The WC and the BOS are supportive of the decision of the SC to follow the stimulus federal guidelines around spending the money on plugging holes and new initiatives. The SC does not want to fight over scarce resources. Our role is to lead this community, she said, toward a constructive conversation and we are committed to not engaging in that sort of battle, but rather toward continuing to work together. The economic crisis has made the structural deficit even more painful. We must reduce services as part of making the budget sustainable. We need to experience

pain for the long-term good. The school is struggling with mandates that rely on taxes being increased to fund those mandates. This is something that should change.

- Chair Curtis noted that the Senate recently released its revenue figure, with the result that the town's FY10 budget could be down \$341K. The town/school may need to make additional cuts or implement a plan for using free cash, he said, unless there is a plan for new revenue based on a new tax. Member Widmer said that the sales tax increase proposal has passed, but that the state will not be using those new revenues to restore local aid. The state wants to use the 2 cents on meals tax to go toward communities via local aid. The House, Widmer continued, has agreed to the Senate's revenue number, but we won't know the outcome until the end of June.

- Widmer added, in response to SC Chair Rittenburg's comments, that he has spent many WC years focusing on the long-term challenges, e.g., the structural problem. The extent that the town and school can come together to deal with structural issues and come together politically is best for the town. We need to deal with this in a way that will leave us stronger in the long-run.

- BOS Chair Leclerc said that he appreciates the WC and SC Chair Rittenburg's thoughtful comments. He said that he appreciates that the cuts are painful and added that every dollar lost on the town side is just as stressful as it is for the school side. We should avoid the conversation of what is worth more.

- The WC then discussed what the 2 cent meals tax would mean for Belmont.

### ***FY10 Free Cash***

- Chair Curtis noted that there is presently \$1.4M in free cash.

- Member Bruschi moved that the WC appropriate \$341,000 from free cash for purpose of funding the FY10 budget. All voted in favor.

- School Finance Director Missal noted that the School is losing \$200K more due to the circuit breaker change. This \$200K is independent of the \$341K loss in local aid. The school has no reserves from which to make up this \$200K. It may need to come out of stimulus money, he said. Chair Curtis responded that the \$200K would have to be discussed at another time.

### ***Discussion of FY10 Budget: Voting the Budget to Present to Town Meeting***

- Town Accountant Hagg led the WC through the following TM articles.

#### ***Article 10 - Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund***

- Member Heigham moved that the WC support Article 10 with favorable action.

- All WC members were in favor.

- **Article 5 – *The salaries of elected officials***

- Member Heigham moved that the WC support Article 5 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- **Article 7 - *Contributory Retirement Pension***

- Member Brusch moved that the WC support Article 7 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- Chair Curtis noted that TM members would like more information on pension funding.

- **Article 9 – *Capital Budget***

- Member Heigham moved that the WC support Article 9 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- **Article 4 – *Summary Budget***

- Items 010-099 - The only change from the budget we've been working with, explained Town Accountant Hagg, is that the debt service has decreased approximately \$40K because the exact figures for the Senior Center debt is known. This does not increase available revenue since the Senior Center is a debt exclusion and such debt is paid from that source.

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 4: Public Safety, Minuteman, Public Schools, Public Services, Human Services, Culture and Recreation, and Debt Service with favorable action.

- All of the above passed unanimously with favorable action with the exception of Minuteman (7 in favor, 7 opposed) and Human Services (13 in favor, 1 opposed).

- **Article 3 - *Sources of Revenue***

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 3 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- **Free cash line item** – Increase draft from \$800K to \$1.141M. This is an additional \$341K from the original budget to offset the Senate Ways and Means proposed budget cuts, explained Hagg.

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support acceptance of the new free cash number.

- All WC members were in favor.

- ***Special TM Articles***

- ***Article 2 – Transfers into Reserve Fund***

- There were two items proposed: 1) \$100,000 from Kendall Fire account for the design services at the Wellington; 2) \$26,453 from the proceeds from an Insurance Reimbursement for the Main Fire station smoke damage (from neighborhood home). These transfers were to reimburse the Reserve Fund for funding done mid-year for these purposes.

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 2 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- ***Article 3 - \$200,000 Free Cash for Snow and Ice***

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 3 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- ***Article 4 - \$30,900 Old Capital Projects***

- This closes out unused funds from prior Town meeting Capital Project votes. Such funds will be voted as a revenue source for the FY10 budget.

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 4 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- ***Second motion of Article 4 - Close \$688K from Chenery Middle School Project and Transfer to the Wellington School Construction Project (if approved).***

- Should this be approved by both TM members and the voters as a debt exclusion, both projects would have funding under that mechanism.

- Member Hofmann moved that the WC support Article 4 with favorable action.  
- All WC members were in favor.

- Chair Curtis then discussed the logistics of the WC report for TM. He stated that he needs the final reports from sub-committees by Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

- ***Minutes***

- The minutes of May 13 were approved.

- ***Other***

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- The next WC meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2009. However, the WC may meet prior to the June 1<sup>st</sup> TM.

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- Member Heigham moved that the WC adjourn at 8:49 pm.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary